

Oliver Smith Papers

Guides to Special Collections in the Music Division of the Library of Congress



**LIBRARY OF
CONGRESS**

**Music Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2017**

Contact information:

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/perform.contact>

Additional search options available at:

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/eadmus.mu017013>

LC Online Catalog record:

<http://lcn.loc.gov/2014572483>

Processed by the Music Division of the Library of Congress

Collection Summary

Title: Oliver Smith Papers

Span Dates: 1942-1983

Call No.: ML31.S64

Creator: Smith, Oliver Lemuel, 1918-1994.

Extent: approximately 2,000 items ; 100 containers ; 61.5 linear feet

Language: Material chiefly in English

Location: Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Summary: Oliver Smith was an American production designer, producer, and teacher of theatrical design. Smith contributed his talents to many of the twentieth century's most beloved musicals, ballets, and plays, including *Rodeo* (1942), *On the Town* (1944), *My Fair Lady* (1956), *West Side Story* (1957), *The Sound of Music* (1959), and *Hello, Dolly!* (1964). The collection includes painted set elevations, renderings, sketches, blueprints and technical drawings, correspondence, photographs, programs, and other materials. Only design materials for select productions are available at this time.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Smith, Oliver Lemuel, 1918-1994.

Smith, Oliver Lemuel, 1918-1994.

Subjects

Ballet--Stage-setting and scenery--United States.

Ballet--United States.

Musical theater--United States.

Scene painting.

Set designers--United States.

Stage props.

Theater--Production and direction.

Theater--United States.

Theaters--Stage-setting and scenery--United States.

Theatrical producers and directors--United States.

Form/Genre

Blueprints (Reprographic copies)

Drawings (Visual works)

Renderings (Drawings).

Sketches.

Administrative Information

Provenance

Purchase, 2010; additional materials received from Rosaria Sinisi, 2012-2015.

Accruals

Further accruals are expected.

Processing History

The Oliver Smith Papers are currently in process. Christopher Hartten, Jennifer Lewis, and staff members of the Library of Congress Preservation Directorate have been processing the design materials since 2015. Christopher Hartten coded the finding aid for EAD format in 2017.

Related Material

The [Peggy Clark Papers \(ML31.C59\)](#) and Roger Stevens Collection contain design materials and correspondence by Smith. Additional correspondence and business papers are found in the [Leonard Bernstein Collection \(ML31.B49\)](#), [Aaron Copland Collection \(ML31.C7\)](#), and [Harold Prince Papers \(ML31.P75\)](#).

Copyright Status

Materials from the Oliver Smith Papers are governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.) and other applicable international copyright laws.

Access and Restrictions

The Oliver Smith Papers are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Music Division prior to visiting in order to determine whether the desired materials will be available at that time.

Certain restrictions to use or copying of materials may apply.

Electronic Files

Electronic files were received as part of the Oliver Smith Papers. Images of select renderings and other design materials for theatrical productions are available. **Researchers are encouraged to view these materials and/or a print slide catalog before requesting physical collection items.** Consult reference staff in the Performing Arts Reading Room for more information.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item, date, container number], Oliver Smith Papers, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1918, Feb. 13	Born Oliver Lemuel Smith in Waupun, Wisconsin, to Larue F. Smith and Nina Kincaid Smith
1932	Smith family moved to Wellsboro, Pennsylvania
1939	Earned B. A. in fine arts from Pennsylvania State University Moved to Brooklyn, planning to work and support himself for a year before attending graduate school at Yale University. He soon after joined cousin and composer Paul Bowles at 7 Middagh Street in Brooklyn Heights, a residence also shared by poet W. H. Auden, composer Benjamin Britten, authors Carson McCullers and Richard Wright, lyricist John LaTouche, and burlesque dancer Gypsy Rose Lee
1939-1940	Continued to refine art portfolio while holding down a variety of local jobs. At Bowles' suggestion, Smith began to apply his love of painting to theatrical design
1941	Opening of Léonide Massine's ballet, <i>Saratoga</i> , the first production featuring Smith's design work. Dance critic Edwin Denby praised Smith's innovative sets, opening the door for a stream of future design opportunities

1942	Collaborated with choreographer Agnes DeMille on her ballet, <i>Rodeo</i> , featuring music by Aaron Copland and sets by Smith
1944	Designed set for the ballet, <i>Fancy Free</i> , featuring choreography by Jerome Robbins and music by Leonard Bernstein Premier of <i>On the Town</i> , with Smith in his first role as co-producer alongside Paul Feigay
1945	Collaborated with Feigay on <i>Billion Dollar Baby</i> Became co-director of Ballet Theater with Lucia Chase, a partnership that lasts until 1980
1948	Ballet Theater premier of <i>Fall River Legend</i> , with sets by Smith, choreography by Agnes DeMille, music by Morton Gould, and costumes by Miles White
1949	Designed sets for and co-produced <i>Gentlemen Prefer Blondes</i> with Herman Levin
1955	Release of the MGM film, <i>Oklahoma!</i> , with Smith in his first role as art director
1956, Mar. 15	Opening of <i>My Fair Lady</i> with Julie Andrews and Rex Harrison, produced by Herman Levin and directed by Moss Hart, with production design by Smith, book and lyrics by Alan J. Lerner, music by Frederick Loewe, and costumes by Cecil Beaton
1956, Oct. 31	Opening of <i>Auntie Mame</i> at the Broadhurst Theatre, with sets by Smith and lighting by Peggy Clark
1957, Sept. 26	Opening of <i>West Side Story</i> at the Winter Garden Theatre, directed and choreographed by Jerome Robbins, with sets by Smith, book by Stephen Sondheim, and music by Leonard Bernstein
1957	Earned six Tony Award nominations for Best Scenic Design and ultimately won for <i>My Fair Lady</i> . In total, Smith would win ten Tony Awards and earn twenty-five nominations throughout his career
1958, Dec. 1	Opening of <i>Flower Drum Song</i> at the St. James Theatre, directed by Gene Kelly, with sets by Smith, book by Oscar Hammerstein II and Joseph Fields, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, music by Richard Rodgers, and lighting by Peggy Clark
1959, Nov. 16	Opening of <i>The Sound of Music</i> at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre, directed by Vincent J. Donehue, with sets by Smith, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, and music by Richard Rodgers
1960, Dec. 3	Opening of <i>Camelot</i> , starring Julie Andrews and Richard Burton, with sets by Smith, book and lyrics by Alan J. Lerner, and music by Frederick Loewe
1963, Oct. 23	Opening of Neil Simon's <i>Barefoot in the Park</i> at the Biltmore Theatre, with sets by Smith. Simon and Smith would collaborate on several other successful plays, including <i>The Odd Couple</i> (1965), <i>Plaza Suite</i> (1968), and <i>Last of the Red Hot Lovers</i> (1969)
1964, Jan. 16	Opening of <i>Hello, Dolly!</i> , starring Carol Channing, with sets by Smith and music and lyrics by Jerry Herman
1965-1970	Served as member of the National Arts Council

1967	Ballet Theater premier of <i>Swan Lake</i> at the Metropolitan Opera House, the first of several collaborations with choreographer David Blair. The pair would also stage <i>Giselle</i> (1968) and <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> (1974)
1971	Co-founded the Lenox Arts Center with Lyn Austin, an organization dedicated to unusual new productions
1971-1994	Taught M.F.A. course in scenic design at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts
1981	Inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame Co-founded the experimental Emerging Artists Laboratory with Richard Englund
1989	Last credited design for <i>Jerome Robbins' Broadway</i>
1990-1992	Returned as co-director of Ballet Theater alongside Jane Herrman. Smith was later named director emeritus of the company from 1992-1994
1994, Jan. 23	Died, Brooklyn

Scope and Content Note

Design materials in the Oliver Smith Papers consist mostly of painted elevations, renderings, sketches, and set plans for theatrical productions designed and/or produced by Smith between the early 1940s and late 1980s. Materials vary widely from production to production and may include any of the following: drop elevations, set renderings, scenic and prop details, ink and pencil sketches, sketchbooks, blueprints and technical drawings, fabric swatches, research materials, production schedules, and other miscellaneous items.

The container list is arranged alphabetically by show title, then chronologically by date/location of production if known. The list largely does not specify individual designs, as most renderings and scenic details have working titles that are very general and provide little context unless they are viewed first hand. Descriptions of individual items are, however, found in a supplemental print index that is available in person upon request. Contents of boxes are identified only for especially notable productions or those with significant quantities of design materials.

Researchers are encouraged to begin their exploration of the Oliver Smith Papers by viewing the digitized collection items and/or a print slide catalog prior to requesting any physical materials. Many of Smith's finest designs are available as high-resolution, digital photographs that were extracted from nearly 300 CDs. Scattered among these images are numerous works by Smith held by other institutions or private collectors.

Additional design materials and other collection items will be added to the finding aid upon completion of processing.

Organization of the Oliver Smith Papers

The Collection is organized into one series:

- [Design Materials, 1942-1983](#)

Description of Series

Container

BOX 1-100

Series

Design Materials, 1942-1983

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-100	Design Materials, 1942-1983
BOX 11	The amazing Adele (1956)
BOX 76-78	Bequest to the nation (1970)
BOX 59	Billion dollar baby (1945)
BOX 33	Breakfast at Tiffany's (1966)
BOX 80	Camelot (1960) Drop elevations
BOX 81	Camelot (1960) Drop elevation, scenic details
BOX 82-85	Camelot (1960) Scenic details
BOX 86	Camelot (1960) Set renderings, scenic details
BOX 87	Camelot (1960) Set renderings, technical drawings
BOX 88	Camelot (1960) Set renderings
BOX 89	Camelot (1960) Set renderings (photostats), scenic detail
BOX 27-29	Candide (1956)
BOX 13-14	Clothes for a summer hotel (1979)
BOX 92	Come on strong (1962)
BOX 58	Darling of the day (1968)
BOX 66	Dear world (1968) Renderings
BOX 67	Dear world (1968) Fabric swatches
BOX 68	Dear world (1968) Drop elevations, scenic details
BOX 69-71	Dear world (1968) Scenic details
BOX 72	Dear world (1968) Drop elevations
BOX 73	Dear world (1968) Drop elevation, technical drawings, renderings (photostats)
BOX 74	Dear world (1968) Drop elevations, scenic detail
BOX 26	Destry rides again (1959)
BOX 91	Do you turn somersaults? (1977)
BOX 95-96	Eighty-four Charing Cross Road (1982)
BOX 25	Estuary (1982)
BOX 10	Fancy free (1944)

Design Materials, 1942-1983

Container

Contents

BOX 56-57	First Monday in October (1978)
BOX 103	Flahooley (1951)
BOX 20-22	The gay life (1961)
BOX 108	Gigi (1973) Scenic details, set renderings, ink sketches
BOX 109	Gigi (1973) Set renderings
BOX 110	Gigi (1973) Scenic details
BOX 111	Gigi (1973) Drop elevations, set renderings (photostats), technical drawings
BOX 112	Gigi (1973) Drop elevation, scenic details
BOX 104	Gracious living (1978)
BOX 32	Guys and dolls (1955) [film]
BOX 90	Harbinger (1967)
BOX 105-107	How now, Dow Jones (1967)
BOX 93-94	I do, I do (1971)
BOX 23-24	Juno and the paycock (1958) Other title: Darlin' man
BOX 15-16	Lunch hour (1980)
BOX 12	Mixed couples (1980)
BOX 79	Mr. Wonderful (1956)
BOX 34	My fair lady (1956) Set renderings, scenic details
BOX 35	My fair lady (1956) Set renderings
BOX 36	My fair lady (1956) Set renderings, scenic details
BOX 37-39	My fair lady (1956) Scenic details, portals, backgrounds
BOX 40	My fair lady (1956) Scenic details
BOX 41	My fair lady (1956) Drop elevations, technical drawings
BOX 42	My fair lady (1956) Drop elevation, scenic details
BOX 43	My fair lady (1956) Drop elevations
BOX 64	My fair lady (1956) Drop elevation
BOX 54	My fair lady (1957, Los Angeles) Scenic details, technical drawings
BOX 55	My fair lady (1957, Los Angeles) Drop elevation, technical drawings Earliest known complete set of plans
BOX 41	My fair lady (1958, London) Drop elevation

Design Materials, 1942-1983

Container

Contents

BOX 54	My fair lady (1958, London) Show curtain
BOX 55	My fair lady (1958, London) Drop elevation
BOX 42	My fair lady (1976) Technical drawing
BOX 44	My fair lady (1976) Ink sketches, technical drawings, production and research materials
BOX 45	My fair lady (1976) Set renderings
BOX 46-47	My fair lady (1976) Scenic details
BOX 48	My fair lady (1976) Ink sketches, technical drawings, props
BOX 49	My fair lady (1976) Drop elevations, technical drawings
BOX 50	My fair lady (1976) Drop elevations, scenic details, technical drawing
BOX 45	My fair lady (1981) Set renderings
BOX 51	My fair lady (1981) Scenic details, technical drawings
BOX 52	My fair lady (1981) Scenic details, fabric swatches
BOX 53	My fair lady (1981) Drop elevation, scenic details
BOX 55	My fair lady (1981) Technical drawings
BOX 54	My fair lady (1983, Franklin Mint drawings) Set rendering, scenic details, props
BOX 54-55	My fair lady (undated, Sun City, South Africa) Technical drawings Unproduced
BOX 97	Naughty Marietta (1962) Set renderings
BOX 98-99	Naughty Marietta (1962) Scenic details, technical drawings
BOX 100	Naughty Marietta (1962) Drop elevations
BOX 63	On a clear day you can see forever (1962) Ink sketches
BOX 62	On a clear day you can see forever (1965) Set renderings
BOX 63	On a clear day you can see forever (1965) Set renderings, technical drawings
BOX 64-65	On a clear day you can see forever (1965) Drop elevations
BOX 30-31	Rodeo (1942)

Design Materials, 1942-1983

Container

Contents

BOX 75	Say darling (1958)
BOX 60-61	Sleeping beauty (1974)
BOX 1-4	The sound of music (1959) Drop elevations
BOX 5	The sound of music (1959) Drop elevations, scenic details
BOX 6-7	The sound of music (1959) Scenic details
BOX 8-9	The sound of music (1959) Set renderings
BOX 17-19	The unsinkable Molly Brown (1960)